

WEEK TWO - Where is Jesus challenging us to grow?

Scripture: Mark 2:23-3:6

23 One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. **24** The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?" **25** And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? **26** He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions." **27** Then he said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; **28** so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."

1 Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there who had a withered hand. **2** They watched him to see whether he would cure him on the sabbath, so that they might accuse him. **3** And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come forward." **4** Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. **5** He looked around at them with anger; he was grieved at their hardness of heart and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. **6** The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

Discussion Questions

1. What stood out to you from Dr. Blount's reflections?
2. What do you think about Dr. Blount's description of "God on the loose" in Mark?
 - a. What is helpful about this image? What is challenging?
3. What do you think about Dr. Blount's understanding of "kingdom calculus" in Jesus?
 - a. Basic idea: negative x positive = positive (The leper being touched by Jesus results in the leper's healing, not Jesus' contamination.)
 - b. What points do you think Jesus was trying to make?
 - c. How are expectations reversed or upended in these encounters?
4. Dr. Blount claims the Law (OT Law) was intended for human wholeness and healing.
 - a. Is this something we normally associate with the Law?
 - b. How does this perspective affect our interpretation of this passage?
5. Dr. Blount shares his experiences with Jim Crow laws in the South as an example of a law serving individual goals ("becoming legalized") rather than promoting human wholeness and healing ("God's original intent for humankind through the Law").
 - a. Can you think of other examples of laws, customs, or traditions that serve one group at the expense of communal wholeness and healing?
6. Dr. Blount claims Mark's Gospel challenges us to think about "what you're willing to bring on" during the season of Lent rather than what you're willing to give up.

- a. What do you think about this shift in focus?
 - b. What can we “bring on” during this season of Lent for the sake of Christ’s boundary-breaking love?
7. How does this passage inform our journey with Christ through Lent?